

A METHODOLOGY FOR IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICE FOR COMMUNICATIONS PROVIDERS

Innovative enterprises seeking to be 'lean operators' are characterised by the identification and implementation of Best Practice. Best Practice in any enterprise will depend on the specific nature and activities of that enterprise, but a common goal will be to seek out those practices found anywhere in the enterprise that exhibit fulfilment of the criteria that would identify them as candidates for Best Practice and show potential for general adoption across all entities performing similar activities. A methodology for defining and identifying Best Practice, as well as the definitions of criteria and a roadmap towards achieving this, is proposed here. This paper is written in the context of a global Communications Provider seeking to gain common practices and maximum effectiveness across all of its entities.

BEST PRACTICE

Enterprises that have a culture of innovation and efficiency will be on the constant lookout for best practices that can be propagated throughout the enterprise in order to make it optimal in all aspects.

This is especially true of enterprises that are geographically dispersed, i.e. global with many entities, which perform many similar activities and therefore offer many opportunities for adopting common practices and achieving the same high standards.

There are many domains within any enterprise that this will apply to, including:

- design and development
- operations/production
- legal and regulatory compliance
- security
- environmental

and so forth.

Candidates for Best Practice can be discovered in all parts of the enterprise. In many cases these may be scattered across the geography of the enterprise and a focussed effort must be made to go out and discover these wherever they may occur.

Methods for defining best practice are available for many professions and activities, but these are not necessarily transferrable to others.

This paper is written in the context of a global Communications Provider and seeks to address the activities of that domain. However, this could be equally applied to many other engineering and commercial domains.

PRACTICE CLASSIFICATION

Candidates for Best Practice may either be at an early stage of development, fully mature, or somewhere in-between. In this context, practices can be classified against the following evolutionary scale:

1. **Developing** - A program, activity or strategy that is in concept or development and shows potential to become a best practice. Its relevancy, effectiveness and potential for replication among other organizations is not yet proven.
2. **Promising** - A program, activity or strategy that has worked within one organization and shows promise during its early stages for becoming a best practice with long term sustainable impact. A promising practice must have some objective basis for claiming effectiveness and must have the potential for replication among other organizations¹.
3. **Good** - A program, activity or strategy that meets most of the following criteria: leads to an actual change, has an impact on the policy environment, demonstrates an innovative or replicable approach, and demonstrates sustainability.
4. **Best** - Those methods or techniques that have consistently shown results superior to those achieved with other means in a given situation and that could be adapted for other situations. This must be shown to work effectively and produce successful outcomes by the evidence provided by subjective and objective data sources.

Evolution to a higher classification is achieved by meeting additional criteria as improvements are made. In general, this necessitates rigorous evaluation, demonstrated success and impact and capacity for replication².

The criteria suggested by this methodology are addressed in the following section.

¹ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Best_practice - <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/best-practice.html>

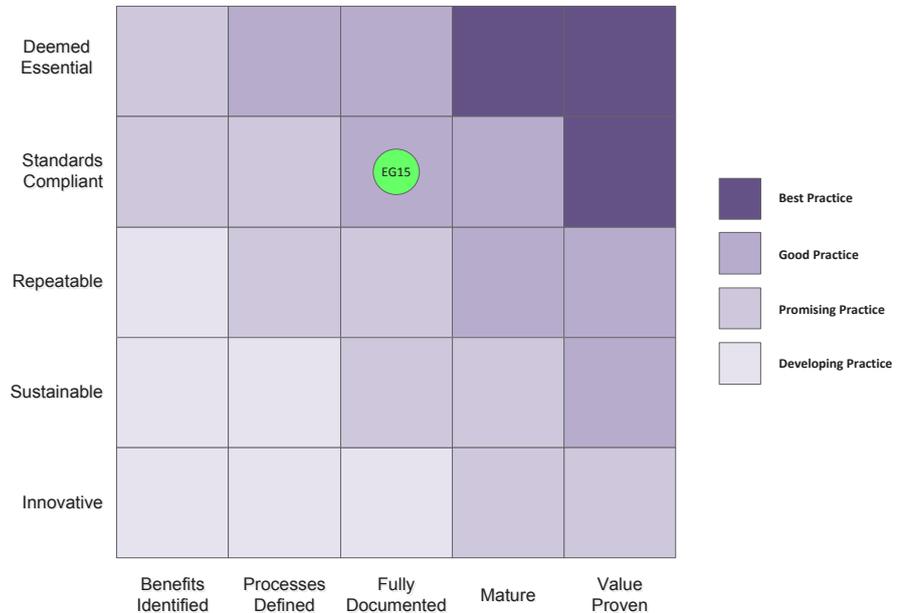
² <http://www.answers.com/topic/best-practice#ixzz1fMwVJ5IW>

<http://www.answers.com/topic/best-practice#ixzz1fMxefGSO>

THE MATRIX

The following matrix provides a framework for ranking a Practice against the criteria required to classify it, or identify where the Practice is in the evolutionary scale. Positioning a Practice on the matrix provides an indication of the potential for that Practice to be classified as Best Practice. Practices placed in the lower left of the matrix are those that have a lower ranking, whereas those placed in the upper right of the matrix are those that are ranked highest. The resulting Ranking will indicate where a given Practice is on the evolutionary scale.

Best Practice Matrix



The Criteria listed here are not hard-and-fast and can be adapted to more closely fit the needs of the enterprise. Those suggested here are:

VERTICAL AXIS

The Criteria for this axis are:

Criteria	Related questions
Innovative	Is this a unique idea, does it break new ground, does it significantly enhance an existing Practice?
Sustainable	Does it require more effort than it is worth, is it dependent on an individual, does it have sponsorship, is it funded?
Repeatable	Is it restricted for any local reasons, can it be easily replicated elsewhere?
Standards Compliant	does it comply with local and/or industry standards?
Deemed Essential	Can the business do without it, has it become embedded in the business operations?

HORIZONTAL AXIS

The Criteria for this axis are:

Criteria	Related questions
Benefits Identified	What does it deliver, how is this unique, who/what does it benefit?
Process Defined	Are the processes well defined?
Fully Documented	Is it well documented, is the documentation complete and up-to-date?
Mature	How long has it been in operation, how stable is it, is it well integrated?
Value Proven	Is it expensive to implement and operate, does it require a lot of attention, what benefits has it delivered, can the benefits be financially quantified?

CLASSIFICATION OF PRACTICES

Classification of a Practice is incremental across both axis of the model. This means that all prior requirements must be met to achieve a level, i.e. it is accumulative and dependent on the criteria preceding it being fulfilled. A Practice is classified at the lowest cumulative level it has achieved.

A scoring matrix to determine the degree of achievement of criteria, such as the following, can also assist in the classification of a Practice:

Criteria	Benefits Identified	Processes Defined	Fully Documented	Mature	Value Proven
Deemed Essential	6	7	8	9	10
Standards Compliant	5	6	7	8	9
Repeatable	4	5	6	7	8
Sustainable	3	4	5	6	7
Innovative	2	3	4	5	6

This can be employed to rate each Practice by mapping the fulfilled Criteria onto the matrix. The reasons for the resulting classification can then be justified based on the Criteria met. This can also indicate Criteria that need more development in order for the Practice to receive a higher classification.

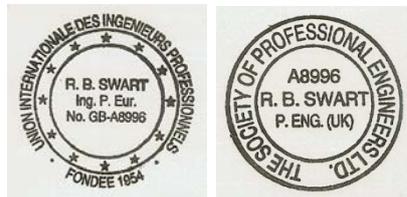
CONCLUSION

Identification and replication of Best Practices will provide great benefit to any enterprise and assist it to achieve its goals of standardisation and efficiency. This also provides recognition of innovation, providing a boost in morale for the individuals and/or teams responsible,

Classification of Practices can be achieved by using the simple model proposed by this paper; allowing for adaptation of the criteria to more closely fit the activities of the enterprise.

Thereafter it remains up to the enterprise to manage the change programme which will ensure the adoption of Best Practice in the domain where it applies across the geography of the enterprise.

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